

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 NEA-10 EA-07 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05
PC-01 DHA-02 A-01 OMB-01 OPR-02 MCT-01 SY-05 /095 W
-----200323Z 106875 /64

O R 200206Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9270 IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMERICAN EMBASSY BANGUI
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY LOME IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 143

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, DM
SUBJECT: BENIN COUP ATTEMPT: LOOK AT THE GOODIES*

1. MFA PROTOCOL DEPARTMENT CONVOKED CHIEFS OF MISSION AND
"TWO OTHER DIPLOMATS" FROM EACH EMBASSY IN COTONOU TO "SEE
BATTLE DAMAGE AT PRESIDENTIAL PALACE" WEDNESDAY AT 1400 HRS LOCAL.
CHARGE AND VICE-CONSUL WENT. ONLY EMBASSIES RESIDENT IN COTONOU
NOT REPRESENTED WERE THE NIGERIANS AND CHINESE.

2. PRESIDENT KEREKOU RECEIVED US ALL IN COURTYARD BEFORE LARGE
"HALL OF THE PEOPLE," TELLING US THIS WAS HIS FIRST VISIT TO
PALACE SINCE COUP ATTEMPT. WITH WRY CONTEMPT CURLING HIS LIPS,
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KEREKOU INVITED DIPLOMATS "FROM THE COUNTRIES WITH WHOM WE HAD
PREVIOUSLY SPOKEN OF CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION" TO SEE WITH THEIR OWN EYES THE PROVENANCE OF THE
WEAPONS THAT HAD BEEN CAPTURED OR FOUND SINCE SUNDAY MORNING.
HE SAID AN INQUIRY WAS IN PROCESS AND THE GPRB WOULD BE TALKING
WITH SELECTED DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS LATER REGARDING THE METHOD
BY WHICH THESE WEAPONS CAME TO BE IN THE HANDS OF THE MERCENARIES.

3. LONG TABLES WERE SET UP INSIDE THE HALL WITH WEAPONS, MUNITIONS, MEDICATIONS AND ONE PORTABLE RADIO. WEAPONS INCLUDED BELGIAN FN AUTOMATIC ASSAULT RIFLES, A LIGHT MACHINE GUN WITH ARABIC MARKINGS AND THE LION SEAL OF ETHIOPIA (ALL THESE IN CAL. 7.65 MM) ONE MORTAR SHELL WITH ARABIC SCRIPT, ONE CARDBOARD TUBE THAT MIGHT HAVE HELD A MORTAR ACCELERATOR CHARGE AND HAD CYRILLIC PRINTING ON SIDE, TWO 50 CALIBER MACHINE GUNS, ONE 80 MM MORTAR TUBE (THESE THREE OF APPARENT U.S. ORIGIN) AND A VERY SIZEABLE COLLECTION OF WHAT LOOKED TO BE AMERICAN HAND GRENADES AND DISPOSABLE SHOULDER-LAUNCHED ANTI-TANK WEAPONS. WE DO NOT HAVE NECESSARY REFERENCE WORKS IN EMB TO GIVE EXACT DESIGNATIONS, AND COULD NOT FIND LOT NUMBERS ON GRENADE CARTON, BUT WOULD LIKE PARTICULARLY TO SIGNAL PRESENCE OF THE AT WEAPONS WHICH APPEAR TO PULL OUT TELESCOPICALLY AFTER REMOVING A SAFETY PIN AND SWINGING UP THE EXHAUST PORT DOOR. THEY LOOK TO FIRE A PROJECTILE OF 1-1/2 OR 2 INCHES AND THE ENTIRE TUBE ASSEMBLY IS OF PLASTIC OR CARDBOARD. DIAGRAMATIC INSTRUCTIONS ON SIDE IN ENGLISH EXPLAIN METHOD OF USE THIS ITEM. NOTABLY LACKING FROM THIS DISPLAY WAS AT GRENADE LAUNCHER RP-7 WHICH WAS PICTURED IN MONDAY'S "EHUZU," LEADING TO SPECULATION THAT ANY SOVIET BLOC WEAPONS HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM DISPLAY.

4. WE THEN MADE AN EXTENSIVE TOUR OF THE PRESIDENCY, WHICH SUFFERED MOSTLY 30-CALIBER BULLET HOLES, AFTER WHICH KEREKOU STOPPED IN THE FRONT DRIVEWAY AND MADE ANOTHER LONG AND CONTEMPTUOUS STATEMENT TO PRESS AND DIPLOMATS ABOUT "SUPPOSEDLY CIVILIZED COUNTRIES, THE LANGUAGE OF ONE OF WHICH WE SPEAK

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HERE TODAY, WHO HAVE SENT BARBARIC MERCENARIES TO FORMERLY UNCIVILIZED BENIN." WE WONDERED ALOUD IF MAYBE THE CIVILIZERS AND THE UNCIVILIZED HAD CHANGED PLACES.

5. FRENCH AMBASSADOR MEADMORE, DEAN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, WAS THEN ASKED FOR COMMENT. STARTING WITH A 30-SECOND STAMMER, EYES LITERALLY ROLLING WITH NERVOUSNESS, HE MADE COMMENTS DEPLORING MERCENARY ACTIVITIES AND STATED THAT HE WOULD AWAIT THE RESULTS OF THE INQUIRY. OTHER AMBASSADORS WHO MADE STATEMENTS WERE THE EGYPTIANS, ZAIRIAN, NORTH KOREAN AND WEST GERMAN. NORTH KOREAN MADE A VIGOROUS ATTACK ON WEST, AS COULD BE ANTICIPATED, REFERRING TO THE WESTERNERS AS THE "WHITE SKINS."

6. PARTICULARLY ACTIVE IN THE PRESS INTERVIEW OF AMBASSADORS AFTER THE PALACE TOUR WAS THE TASS CORRESPONDENT WHO MISSED NO OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE ANTI-IMPERIALIST REMARKS, TURNING SOME VERY COLORFUL PHRASES WHICH WILL CERTAINLY MAKE GOOD COPY IN PARTS

OF THIRD WORLD.

7. COMMENT: TWO OBSERVATIONS OF NOTED FROM THE TOUR: FIRST, ALTHOUGH WE WERE TOLD NO INVADERS GAINED ENTRANCE TO PALACE GROUNDS, MANY HOLES ON INSIDE WALLS AND WINDOWS COULD ONLY HAVE COME FROM INSIDE THE PALACE ITSELF -- PROBABLY THE PALACE GUARD FIRING WILDLY IF ONE IS TO BELIEVE INVADERS WERE NOT INSIDE -- AND SECONDLY, THAT KEREKOU IS AT LEAST BEGINNING TO BELIEVE HIS OWN RHETORIC. SPEAKING EXTEMPORANEOUSLY AND WITH EXTREME CALM, HE FLAILED AWAY AT EVERY BOGEYMAN HIS PROPAGANDA MINISTRY HAS IDENTIFIED TO DATE: INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISMS, NEO-COLONIALISM, APARTHEID, OVERLY-RICH COUNTRIES WHERE WORKERS CANNOT ENJOY THE FRUITS OF THEIR OWN SWEAT AND LABOR, AND LACK OF RESPECT FOR THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES. HE ALSO ACCUSED THE "CAPITALIST PRESS" OF HAVING ALREADY DISTORTED THE TRUTH BY SAYING THE COUP WAS AN INTERNAL AFFAIR, SAID IT COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN MOUNTED WITH OUTSIDE COMPLICITY. CONFIDENTIAL

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Message Attributes

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